

EDMUND ENGELMAN

PHOTOGRAPHER OF SIGMUND FREUD'S HOME AND OFFICES

ARNOLD WERNER, EAST LANSING, MI

Over the course of several days in May 1938, Edmund Engelman, a young, talented and resourceful Viennese photographer, immortalised the home and offices of Sigmund Freud in a series of pictures that represent the fullest visual documentation of the setting in which Freud lived and worked throughout almost his entire career. He also photographed Freud, his daughter and his wife. These photographs are best known through a book that also contains a memoir of Engelman (Engelman, 1976). The photographs have been recognised primarily for their documentary value and not appreciated for their artistic merit. Through a series of interviews with Engelman and members of his family, biographical data about the artist and information about the photographs has been gathered that heretofore has not been published. This historical note elaborates on Engelman's life before and after taking the photographs, and places the photographs in the context of the life of the photographer.

Edmund Engelman died on 11 April 2000 in New York City at the age of 92, almost 62 years after the fateful week in which he produced iconic photographs of the living and working quarters occupied by Freud and his family for nearly 47 years. The story of how Engelman came to take the photographs is well known and documented by him in *Bergasse 19*, published in 1976 (Engelman, 1976). August Aichorn, an intimate of Freud, knew Engelman as a young, innovative photographer who operated Photo City, a photographic centre in Vienna. They shared artistic, political and social interests. Aware of Freud's imminent departure from Vienna, Aichorn was concerned that a visual record be established of the setting in which Freud had worked and lived since 1891. Meeting Engelman in the café he frequented, Aichorn asked him to undertake the project, which involved substantial personal risk as the Nazis held Freud's quarters under close surveil-

lance. Engelman only had time to produce an incomplete set of draft prints before he also had to flee Austria.

Engelman describes his harrowing escape from Vienna in his memoir in *Bergasse 19*. He ends the story shortly after linking up with his fiancée and emigrating to the United States. One of Engelman's sons related that for all of its detail, the memoir tells only 'half of the story' of his parents' flight from Europe. Similarly, there is unrecorded information about Engelman's photographic endeavour and his observations about Freud's apartment and office. Engelman's experiences after the war also have never been told. Since most people's knowledge of his work comes through the small reproductions in *Bergasse 19*, his photographs have been regarded for their documentary value and not generally appreciated for their artistic and technical merit. Following a series of telephone conversations and an exchange of letters, I

visited and photographed Engelman and his wife in May 1996. We communicated further by telephone, mail and e-mail until a few months before his death. In our exchanges, Engelman shared observations and details that have not been previously recorded. I also had informative and helpful communications with his wife and sons, who provided added details and insight about Engelman's life in Vienna and in the United States.

THE PHOTOGRAPHER AND THE PHOTOGRAPHS

Engelman grew up in the same neighbourhood as Freud and attended the same high school that Freud did, some fifty years later. An engineer by training, Engelman graduated from the Technische Hochschule with a degree in mechanical and electrical engineering. He also pursued the formal study of photography and cinematography and had strong interests in the arts and politics. He became a highly gifted photographer intimately familiar with the arcane details of this craft. With employment opportunities as an engineer limited because of anti-Semitism, in 1932 he opened a photography studio and store in downtown Vienna. Photo City was well known throughout Austria and counted among its clientele government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, entertainers such as Marlene Dietrich and other devotees of photography and cinema.

His innovative work included combining cinema and theatre, in which he filmed the audience as they arrived, quickly processed the film and incorporated it into the production after the intermission. From 1932 to 1938 he advised the Anatomical Institute of the University of Vienna's School of Medicine on the use of photography in medical education.

Photography played a role in Engelman's social, cultural and political life when he documented an historically significant event some four years before he took the Freud pictures. In the process of crushing a Social Democratic Party worker's strike aimed at deterring the rise of fascism, Austria's Dollfuss regime used heavy artillery to destroy the Vienna housing projects where the workers had barricaded themselves. Engelman, who was a member of the Social Democratic Party, documented the resulting devastation including the homeless women and children of the housing projects. These photographs recorded events that were prophetic of things to come. Unfortunately, they could never be shown to an audience as they testified to Engelman's sympathies. In fact, Engelman destroyed the negatives after the *Anschluss*, as he mentions in his memoir, because they would have been 'fatally incriminating' if they had been found by the Nazis. Engelman related that Aichorn was also a Social Democrat whose pioneering work with delinquents and the underprivileged was manifested in his political allegiances.

The substantial danger in taking the photographs derived from the Nazi's continual surveillance of Freud's home. A minimum of equipment and only natural light from windows and lamps could be used. His cameras were a Leica, which used 35mm film, equipped with normal and wide angle lenses, and a Rolleiflex, which took 6×6 cm ($2\frac{1}{4} \times 2\frac{1}{4}$ inch) pictures. Both cameras were known for their superior optics, as they are today. He used a tripod to support the cameras during the long exposures necessitated by the low light levels. He photographed for several days in May 1938. Each night he would process the film and make some draft prints, a set of which he prepared for Freud.¹ Engelman proceeded systematically through the

¹Engelman used Agfa film. Film sensitivity to light was low compared to today's commonly used materials, which typically are eight times more responsive to light. To overcome this, Engelman processed his film in warm developer to enhance its sensitivity without substantially changing its grain pattern and sharpness.

rooms and he recalled for me: 'I took pictures of the rooms according to how they were laid out. I then went back and took another tour of the rooms to get details' missed on the first effort. He repeated the process a second time. I have examined the proofs of the archived original negatives. There are 106 images, 76 taken with the Leica and 30 with the Rolleiflex.

The photographs are remarkable for their detail and luminosity. This can only be hinted at in small reproductions although a 1998 book based on the photographs uses the latest printing techniques resulting in vastly improved clarity compared to the original edition. The new edition lacks the introductory essay and notes by Yale historian and Freud biographer Peter Gay, and the extensive captions of Rita Ransohoff. It does contain Engelman's memoir and an introduction by Inge Scholz-Strasser, who is director of the Sigmund Freud Society in Vienna (Engelman, 1998). Engelman selected eight fewer photographs for the new edition, reducing some redundancy and included one photograph not in the original edition.

Most of the photographs in the book are part of an exhibit donated by Engelman to a museum which has a set available for exhibit.² Although the exhibit has travelled widely, and some of the photographs can be seen at the Freud museums in London and Vienna, most scholars are familiar with the photographs only through the original book and its reprinted paperback edition, both now out of print. The exhibit photographs are printed from the original negatives and are as large as 24 × 24 inches. At this size, their quality is immediately apparent. One is placed in the midst of Freud's collection of antiquities that covered nearly every surface, and artwork that covered all of the walls.

Engelman volunteered to take the Freuds' passport photos, which are presented in the

exhibition as larger than life and are shocking in their stark bluntness. One view of Freud, with his head turned slightly to the left, shows the hollowness of his right cheek resulting from the repeated surgery on his maxilla and palate. It was a copy of this photograph that Freud requested and inscribed to Engelman: 'Heartfelt thanks to the artist—Freud 1938'. When I visited the Engelmans, the dedicated photograph was prominently displayed in their living room. In a whimsical moment not fully recorded in his memoir, Engelman related that he remembered that Freud was always photographed wearing eyeglasses, so he asked if he could photograph him without his glasses. Freud was amused by this and agreed; Engelman thought he could see the trace of a grin in the resulting portrait. The photographs of the living quarters are notable for their lack of anything notable. The apartment was much like the apartment of any other professional class family of that time in Vienna. Again, in the large photographs with their great tonal range and careful attention to perspective, one can easily imagine what it must have been like to be in those rooms.

The natural inclination is to view the photographs in the book as having been taken in the order in which they appear but this is not always the case. For example, it is readily apparent that the pictures of the outside of the building were taken on at least two days. The first and third pictures in the 1976 book were taken on a rainy day, with the Leica on the first day Engelman photographed, judging by his description in his memoir. The second picture was taken on a dry day with the Rolleiflex. Because the 35mm negatives were kept in strips and are numbered on the edge, it is possible to determine the sequence in which the rolls were taken. There are three rolls of 35mm negatives with 23–27 exposures on each. The 6 × 6cm negatives were unfortunately cut into single frames. The

²Guild Hall of East Hampton, Inc. 158 Main St., East Hampton, NY 11937; tel.: (516) 324-0806.

6 × 6cm roll film did not have edge numbering in the late 1930s so discerning the order in which the Rolleiflex pictures were taken requires some speculation. The presentation in the book provides a progressive view of the rooms created by choosing the best photo-

graph of each scene. I had the opportunity to examine the proof sheets of all of the photographs and to establish the order in which most of the pictures were taken.³

In the large photographs one also more readily notes detail such as the kiddush cups



Copyright © Edmund Engelman

View of Freud's writing desk in his study. The chair, which had an unusual shape was made for him in 1930 by Felix Augenfeld, an architect and family friend. The mirror hanging on the window frame was used by Freud to adjust his palate prosthesis before he went into his consulting room to see patients (1976, p. 56).

³The first roll of 35mm film contains pictures of Freud's consulting room, waiting area, entry area, entry door, stairs, hallway and rainy day photos of the street and building. The second roll of 35mm film records Freud's study, the small room where he received care for his tumour and more pictures of the consulting room. The last four pictures are of Freud at his desk, which corresponds to Engelman's description of his third day photographing, during which he first met Freud. The third roll of Leica pictures has twenty-one posed portraits (six of Anna Freud, seven of Martha Freud and eight of Freud) and five more pictures of Freud at his desk. Fifteen more pictures of the consulting room and office were taken with the Rolleiflex, as well as three more exterior building pictures. Ten pictures of the Freud's apartment and two of Anna Freud's consulting room were also taken with the larger camera. One 6 × 6cm negative of Freud's desk (plate 25 in the original edition of *Bergasse 19*) has been lost.

(Jewish ceremonial wine cups) that stand on the corner of a table in some photographs, but are absent in other views of the same table.⁴ The photographs with the cups are not in the recent edition (Engelman, 1998). Engelman died before I had an opportunity to discuss with him his choice of photographs for the 1998 edition. In response to my enquiry about the absence of the photographs with the kiddush cups, the publisher told me he 'got a selection by Mr Engelman himself from which I had to lay out the book'.⁵

I raised the matter of the kiddush cups in a conversation with Engelman since they stand out among the objects photographed as the only examples of Jewish religious significance. Engelman pointed out that the objects he saw numbered more than 2,000. They were often moved around by the housekeeper when she cleaned, but also were moved by Freud. Engelman recalls taking pictures of Freud's desk and then returning to see statues in different locations. The maid had a small room where she took silver objects to polish them. Engelman hypothesised that the cups were removed for such a purpose and rejected the notion that were removed for some other reason, such as hiding them, since it was apparent that he had already photographed them and they were never mentioned to him. Examination of the sequence in which the photographs were taken suggests that the order of scenes of the table on which the cups stood was arbitrary.⁶

Engelman makes two other observations of note concerning the cups as they relate to any possible religious significance. First, when asked why he thought Freud had the cups, he stated that Freud 'was a collector of every-

thing old and beautiful'. Freud had many things stored in drawers and elsewhere that he purchased just because they appealed to him. Engelman thinks the cups may have been such objects. Engelman reminded me of his personal knowledge of Freud's collecting proclivities, which came in part from one of his closest friends who was the son of an antiquities dealer Freud regularly patronised.

Second, he stated, 'I can almost say with certainty that there was not any kind of religious observation in the house ... There were no *mezuzahs* [scriptural passage enclosed in a small case attached to door posts found in the homes of Jews]'. In this regard, Engelman described Freud's household as being like that of most other Viennese Jews, including his own family, who 'felt Jewish as a group' largely because of anti-Semitism. Religiously observant Jews in Vienna were by and large those who had arrived from Poland and Russia after the First World War.

FLEEING VIENNA

Engelman had thought about leaving Vienna before the *Anschluss*, in March 1938, which convinced him to apply for a visa at the American consulate. He was placed on a waiting list. The 'Aryanisation' of property resulted in the loss of Photo City in September 1938. By the time *Kristallnacht* occurred on 10 November 1938, Engelman had been engaged for some time in trying to wrest himself free of Vienna. He hid successfully for a while and, realising that his immigration quota number to the United States was not going to come up, he settled on a strategy

⁴The cups are present in plates 15 and 17 and absent in plates 11 and 16 in the original edition.

⁵Personal communication: Dr Christian Brandstatter, Vienna, Austria.

⁶The kiddush cups appear in some 35mm and 6 × 6cm negatives but are absent in other 35mm and 6 × 6cm negatives. The cups appear in negatives on the first 35mm roll taken on the first day of shooting and are absent on the second roll. In the original edition of the book, the first picture of the table on which the cups stood is plate 11. This photograph comes from the second roll of film and the cups are absent. Plate 15 taken from the first roll contains the cups; plate 16, from a 6 × 6cm negative, lacks the cups, whereas plate 17, also from a 6 × 6cm negative has the cups. Plate 19, from the second 35mm roll, also lacks the cups.

involving bribery of a Bolivian official for an exit visa. This necessitated purchasing passage on a ship from Marseilles to Bolivia, which he never intended to use but enabled him to obtain papers to go to France.

Having already destroyed his negatives documenting the suppression of the worker's revolt, he was still left with what he referred to as his 'precious' Freud negatives. He left these with Aichorn, since possession of them while travelling would jeopardise his safety. He went to France on 1 January 1939 where his fiancée Irene came from Poland to join him. They married there, although their immigrant status was illegal. He managed to obtain some employment during 1939, teaching photography in southern France. Harrowing events continued in France, which was wary of foreigners, especially those who spoke German. Engelman spent time in a detention camp in France, from which he freed himself with great difficulty. War broke out as the couple were making their way to Trieste, where they had booked passage to New York. They made their way back to France and had another disappointment when the French ship on which they had tickets never arrived as scheduled. They finally left through Italy, which had not yet entered the war, and they had to smuggle assets out of France to pay their way.

In relating this story, Engelman was still sensitive to misunderstanding of the circumstances that prevailed, leading some people to think, mistakenly, that Jews were passive and did not try to escape. The hurdles to escape were monumental and many tried in vain. He still expressed deep regret over the failure of so many national governments to provide respite.

IN THE UNITED STATES

After arriving in New York, the couple successfully fought efforts to deport Irene because she had entered on a Polish student visa. Financial resources were so tight that

they remember writing postcards rather than making telephone calls to save a few pennies. As the United States' entry into the war approached, Engelman's engineering skills enabled him to obtain employment and the needed security clearance. From 1940 to 1946 he worked as an engineer, developing electronic equipment for combat planes and other aviation projects. Several of his ideas resulted in patents assigned to his employers, including an alternator failure warning system that became standard equipment in all planes.

For a number of years after the war he owned a photography centre, Midway Camera Exchange on 6th Avenue in mid-town Manhattan, before resuming his work as a photographic engineer focusing on technology for automating photographic processing. He patented a system for the electrolytic recovery of silver from spent photographic fixing solutions.

With the war over, Engelman set out to retrieve the Freud negatives. Aichorn died before Engelman could locate him. The value of the negatives as important historical records was correctly perceived by those who knew of them. Aichorn's family gave the negatives to his secretary who sent them to Anna Freud in London for safekeeping. Anna Freud returned the negatives to Engelman when he visited her.

Engelman's photography after the war was family-related. He was asked to do other photography but this never occurred. Irene Engelman completed her education and became a psychiatric social worker and a psychotherapist. She is retired from Hillside Hospital.

Acknowledgements: The author is indebted to the Engelman family, Edmund and Irene and their sons Ralph and Thomas. They provided me with essential historical and personal data and made it possible for me to examine the proofs of the original negatives. Their generosity is great and deeply appreciated. The author also wishes

to thank Dr Elisabeth Young-Bruehl who encouraged this report.

TRANSLATIONS OF SUMMARY

Pendant plusieurs jours en mai 1938, Edmund Engelman, un jeune photographe de Vienne, talentueux de plein de ressources, immortalisa la maison et les bureaux de Sigmund Freud dans une série de photographies qui représentent la plus complète des documentations visuelles du cadre dans lequel Freud vivait et travaillait presque tout au long de sa carrière. Il photographia aussi Freud, sa fille et sa femme. Ces photographies sont surtout connues à travers un livre qui contient aussi une mémoire de Engelman (1976). Les photographies ont été principalement reconnues pour leur valeur documentaire et n'ont pas été appréciées pour leur mérite artistique. À travers une suite d'entretiens avec Engelman et des membres de sa famille, des données biographiques sur l'artiste qui n'ont jamais été publiées et des informations sur les photographies ont été rassemblées. Cette note historique s'étend sur la vie de Engelman avant et après la prise des photographies et situe celles-ci dans le contexte de la vie du photographe.

Im Verlauf mehrerer Tage im Mai 1938 verewigte Edmund Engelman, ein junger, talentierter und wendiger Wiener Photograph das Haus und die Praxisräume von Sigmund Freud in einer Reihe von Bildern, die die vollste visuelle Dokumentation des Settings geben, in dem Freud fast während seiner

ganzen Karriere lebte und arbeitete. Er photographierte auch Freud, seine Tochter und seine Frau. Diese Photographien sind vor allem durch ein Buch bekannt, das auch die Memoiren von Engelman beinhaltet (1976). Die Photographien wurden hauptsächlich wegen ihrer dokumentarischen Bedeutung anerkannt und nicht wegen ihres künstlerischen Beitrags gewürdigt. Mithilfe einer Reihe von Interviews mit Engelman und Familienmitgliedern wurden bisher unveröffentlichte biographische Daten über den Künstler und Information über seine Photographien zusammengetragen. Dieser historische Beitrag arbeitet Engelmans Leben vor und nach den Photographien heraus und stellt die Photographien in den Lebenszusammenhang des Photographens.

En el transcurso de varios días de mayo de 1938, Edmund Engelman, un joven, talentoso y recursivo fotógrafo vienés immortalizó la casa y las oficinas de Sigmund Freud en una serie de fotografías que son la representación visual más completa del marco en que Freud vivió y trabajó durante casi toda su carrera. También retrató a Freud, su hija y su esposa. Estas fotografías se conocieron más que nada por un libro que también incluye reminiscencias de Engelman (1976). Las fotografías se reconocen ante todo por su valor documental, y no por su mérito artístico. A través de una serie de entrevistas con Engelman y miembros de su familia, se recopilieron algunos datos biográficos inéditos sobre el artista, así como información sobre las fotografías. Esta nota histórica profundiza en la vida de Engelman antes y después de que tomara las fotografías, y las sitúa en el contexto de la vida del fotógrafo.

REFERENCES

ENGELMAN, E. (1976). *Bergasse 19: Sigmund Freud's Home and Offices, Vienna 1938*. New York: Basic Books. Also: 1981, The

University of Chicago Press.
— (1998). *Sigmund Freud: Bergasse 19, Vienna*. New York: Universe Publishing.

ARNOLD WERNER, MD
Michigan State University
Department of Psychiatry
West Fee Hall
East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1316
USA
werner@msu.edu

Copyright © Institute of Psychoanalysis, London, 2002